Tapes: 013 (side B), 053

Transcript of Interview with Irving Senzel

Conducted by Hanson Stuart and James Muhn

March 3, 1988

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IRVING SENZEL INTERVIEW

This is a partial transcription on an interview with Irving Senzel. The interview continues after what was transcribed.

Irving Senzel is a former employee of the Bureau of Land Management. He began his career with the General Land Office, a predecessor agency of the Bureau of Land Management, as a statistician in 1939. After the creation of the Bureau of Land Management, Mr. Senzel went into the Lands Program. Most of his career was in the Lands, Minerals, and Legislative activities of the Bureau. In his later years he held important decision-making positions within the Washington Office. He retired from the Bureau, retired in 1974 but went to work for the staff of the House of Representative's Subcommittee on Public Lands during the period the Federal Land Policy and Management Act was debated and enacted. He is, obviously, an important oral history source.

The interview that follows is the first of what is hoped to be many others. It was conducted on March 3, 1988, at Silver Spring, Maryland. The interviewers were Hanson Stuart, a Technical Information Specialist, and Land Historian James Muhn, both of the Bureau of Land Management's Service Center in Denver, Colorado.

STUART: We'd like to start with when you began with GLO [General Land Office], and what jobs you've held.

SENZEL: Okay. Started in September 1939, as a Statistical Clerk. Became a statistician, eventually Chief of the Division of Research and Analysis.

STUART: When was that?

SENZEL: When I became Chief? About 1945, I don't remember exactly when.

STUART: And so all of your career has been in Washington.

SENZEL: Yes, yes. Then I, when Ed Woosley became Director, I went into the Land Staff. And I became Assistant Chief of that until [Karl] Landstrom became Director in 1961. Then I became the Chief of Division of Lands and Recreation.

STUART: It's interesting that they've identified recreation.

SENZEL: That was the beginning. That was the first .... Previous to that Harold Hochmuth, who was my Chief of Lands, in Woosley's time. He wanted to establish recreation as a function of Lands. In the early ’50s. That was a time of the Outdoor Recreation Review Commission ..... But that [idea] was not approved until after Landstrom. Then [there] was reorganization when the next Director came in.

STUART: Stoddard.

SENZEL: Charles Stoddard. And Lands and Minerals was set up as two separate Divisions which combined the two disciplines, and I became Chief of the Division of Lands and Minerals Technology. Stoddard did Technology, and the other Division was the Division of Lands and Minerals Operations. Held that job until Rasmussen became Director, then I became the Assistant Director for Lands and Minerals in 1966. Reorganization under the next Director. Let's see, no. Rasmussen. Under the change of administration, Rasmussen was retained for four years. I became Assistant Director of a new Directorate, Planning and Legislation and Environmental Coordination ....

MUHN: Is that where you ended, when you retired as

SENZEL: I was Assistant Director, Assistant to the Director. Under

MUHN: Berklund.

SENZEL: And I retired from that.

MUHN: Then you went on to work for the House, or the Senate?

SENZEL: The House ... Subcommittee on Public Lands of the House Interior Committee.

MUHN: When did you leave there?

SENZEL: Well, I was hired to "honcho" the, with the law that became FLPMA. And I was there for nearly two sessions. Then I did a paper on the mining laws for the Senate committee. I think it was already environmental and whatever. You know. Then after that I did a couple of jobs for the GAO [Government Accounting Office] and the minerals group.

MUHN: You span a large segment of the BLM's [past], which is why we've come to talk to you ... before we [get into our specific questions, I would like to know if you] ever kept any personal work papers, and if so, did you ever or do you have any ideas of ever donating [them] to any organization or college ...?

SENZEL: Since I retired, I had some memoirs written, drafted, and I was, on my days in BLM, chiefly what I was involved with.

MUHN: Is that available for people to look at ...?

SENZEL: I don't know when I'm going to do it.

MUHN: Well ... we might as well start ... into the questions we've got ....

MUHN: Why did you join the GLO, the General Land Office?

SENZEL: I came down to the government in 1938 to the Census Bureau. I took a test, and I was certified a Grade 5 in the GLO, so I went there.

MUHN: Sort of luck of the draw.

SENZEL: Yeah, that's it. The opportunity. It was still Depression and not easy to find jobs, such as selected. Sounded good ....

STUART: Do you have a degree and what is your

SENZEL: Economics ... And then I took some courses, extra courses in statistics when I was down there.

MUHN: At the time you were joining the General Land Office, from the research that I've been doing, one thing I noticed, just a little bit before you joined them, the impact of the Taylor Grazing Act, particularly those provisions about classification of public lands, seems to have really been hitting hard and they ... came up with new divisions, for instance, the one that you worked ....

SENZEL: They set up a new Branch. They had Branches then. They had the Branches and Divisions just reversed from what they are today. They had the Branches superior to the Division. Forgotten the exact name, but under it was Divisions of

Classification, Land Classification, and Research and Analysis. And that was the, I think I was, may have been the first employee of both groups ....

MUHN: Not too many people have ever taken note of the General Land Office during this period of time and some people, and a few who have basically said, well, the organization was essentially dead, and they weren't doing anything. Yet when I read those annual reports, I get [an] impression that, because of Taylor Grazing Act and these new ... new authorities they have, it looked like they were really trying hard to become a conservation agency.

SENZEL: Yes, it was.

MUHN: What was your ... impression of

STUART: That's a good question. Was it still a disposal orientation, or was there some other thought?

SENZEL: There were beginnings of other thought that essentially it was still a disposal agency under the control of the old line. And some of the new appointments which were from Keever, appointments were changed, were not the best. They set up a branch of Range Development Service to take over the range improvements, which they called Soil Conservation when the broader term came in. They picked out for that a former field man, examiner, who I understand, was told, was specialized in Desert Land entries. In other words, he didn't come out from a discipline related to conservation. And the, came out of the atmosphere, of small projects, rather than a grand plan. The appointments to the classification staff were good technicians, again not very dynamic in their approaches, but the land classification folks spent time each year to go up to California to classify lands under the Small Tract Act. And then the, my end of it, the Chief and the Assistant Chief were total losses. Very, very bad. So that, and then, the General Land Office itself was so structured as to stifle innovation. It was

centralized in one place, so the field had no real authority to do anything outside of the public cadastral engineers, which were, I thought, a highly competent technical organization. I don't know how well along they were, how well they did in adopting new techniques, but they were professional at whatever work they did. And they had a lot of respect around, and they had, the only ones who really had a manual of any kind. Then the Washington Office, they had what they called the Law Board, which were the older attorneys, [and all work went through them]. So, they were the force for conformity, not for change. And the principal figure in the organization was Tom Havell. You've heard of him.

STUART: Yes.

SENZEL: He was Assistant to the Commissioner at the time of the latter 20s, then he was called Chief of Adjudication, and he had his office right across from the Commissioner, who was more a figurehead than anything else. And Havell had control of the budget, and the O&C [Oregon and California Revested Railroad Grant] lands, and had ready access to the Director, and he was a force for keeping things. In fact, he had a great, took a great deal of pride in returning monies to Treasury over the years. And agency was poor, poor as could be, that when I first came there, you could requisition supplies only once a month. And may not get anything then. So was, exception of few people, oh, another thing is, there was a great fear among the old timers that the work was running out, and some of them squirreled away work. That they would have on hand, in case the regular work, which had been dying out, of course, since

STUART: That's funny.

SENZEL: 1900. Yeah.

STUART: And that shows they were disposal oriented, I guess. I don't know.

SENZEL: Well, that's all they knew. That's all they knew. They were generally speaking, hard working and very cooperative. Go in and ask them a question, they'd give more information than they'd ever want to use. But they were afraid of what's going to happen, and they were not, by and large, professionals. Lot of them were local people, from Maryland and Virginia. Lot of them came down to Washington during World War I. And many of them were lawyers [but] probably never practiced law, they got their degrees here, then stayed around here. And they practiced the internal land law of the General Land Office. There were some people around, I don't know why, so I don't know how much ferment there was. We got Al {**Flosing**} who became our Chief. He was a forester for the Forest Service and on the National Resources Planning Board. He was dynamic and had drive, and whenever saw things under him, at his suggestion, I worked up a decentralization plan for Alaska, which you saw was just a terrible situation. Took two, more than two weeks to get up to Alaska. Everything had to come from Alaska down to Washington, so we, things like we also set up the, eventually got the Division of Forestry set up. They didn't have a Division of Forestry. So, there were in this group. Jack Lawson, the Chief Counsel, was a more dynamic personality. He wasn't, he came from the Department of Justice, and wasn't exactly oriented to land management, as such, but he was receptive to new ideas and he worked with the, especially after Clawson became Director, he was there to help get it going. So, there were to some people, but by and large, it was an inefficient, backward organization, I would think.

STUART: The patronage. Political patronage that people still got jobs in the, Roosevelt when he was President seemed to bring a lot of changes and lot of reform to other areas. Like GLO get

SENZEL: He got Assistant Commissioner Joel David Wolfson, who was [Secretary of the Interior Harold] Ickes. He was a newspaperman like Ickes in Chicago and wanted to prove the effect. One of the first things he did, the only copying the Bureau had for copying its papers was the old letterpress process, in which you get some of the old cases you see it's a very flimsy paper, and it's probably a wet process, where you put these things. We got rid of that, so he was trying to do ... But he was, again, hemmed in by the organization ... Which

of course had the backing of the Hill, committees. In fact, I think, Havell thought that he would become the first Director of the Bureau of Land Management. He was

STUART: He was the power behind the scenes then.

SENZEL: Yeah. He wielded the power. Yeah, sort of a default situation. The Commissioner was not active. In fact, he was on his way downhill.

STUART: That was Fred Johnson, wasn't it? For a long period of time?

SENZEL: Fred. Oh yes, he came in 1930. He put the New Deal and he stayed there. Yeah. Clawson came then in the, he [Johnson] was over the alcoholic period.

MUHN: [How] did World War II affect your office ...?

SENZEL: It just made things worse. In fact, it reduced staff, of course, younger men went off to the Armed Services. The inflow of work was increasing, and they had no system really to detect that, so that when the war was over, they were in a bad situation, as far as the backlog.

MUHN: Well, let's get on to BLM .... What did you think about the reorganization when [it] occurred? Good, bad?

SENZEL: Did I think it was a good idea?

MUHN: At the time.

SENZEL: To me personally?

MUHN: Yes.

SENZEL: Good, good. That the, I thought it was a good development. I didn't know what it was going to lead to. I wasn't in on the background work of this, other people were working on it.

STUART: Were there other alternatives in the works? No one was privy to that then?

SENZEL: What happened was the attack on the Grazing Service. And my personal belief [is that there] would have been no Bureau of Land Management at that point, except they [the Truman Administration] wanted to submerge the Grazing Service under the General Land Office personnel. They got rid of the Grazing Service people. Was my own interpretation then. McCarren, see the House defeated the bill, voted against the bill. McCarren who had attacked the Grazing Service, literally, was able to get the Senate to approve it, which was enough to [enact] the law. In the House, the measure went to the Interior [Committee], was called the Public Lands Committee at that time. And they turned it down. They didn't want change. The Bureau of Land Management, the concept of land management was not popular at that time. In the Senate, it went before the Judiciary Committee, which McCarren, he was chairman of that, so he had control of the measure. So, I think it was, they were eventually very surprised what they had wrought, when the, after Clawson came in and he started to reverse the past.

MUHN: Do you think the fact that McCarren was so willing to allow that to happen was that he probably felt that he could exercise some control with the old GLO guard that was in there.

SENZEL: That's my guess. I'm not sure ... but that's my feeling, that it was really a push behind it that caused it to be enacted, was the desire to keep the control of the public lands along traditional lines, while the administration had a

totally different idea, which shared by its name. They wanted to change it. That's what I think. I think that Havell really thought he was going to be Director, because I think he knew what McCarren was after, and actually what the House was after too. Continued committee domination.

STUART: That it was a Presidential reorganization. Did need Senate or House approval?

SENZEL: And needed approval of one House. See both Houses had to reject it.

STUART: Oh. Okay.

MUHN: Now, that early period when BLM was created, until Clawson comes, seems [a period of] stagnation ... nothing ... seems to be going on. Some of it seems to be due to the fact that Congress, one, did not allow for decentralization.

SENZEL: Well, that came after Clawson.

MUHN: Right. And then budget [appropriations] was apparently still low during that period.

SENZEL: See, the first Director was Fred Johnson. Total figurehead. Domination still by the old guard. Havell, particularly, was at least a symbol of the whole thing. It was nothing really happening. In fact, the administration had hired Clawson as Regional Administrator in California, which was, he didn't know at the time, seemed he was being trained, opportunity to get experience, because he came from the Bureau of the Agriculture, Economics, a researcher really, no experience, certainly didn't know the problems. So, they put him out there, and one of the things that Clawson was talking about was decentralization, and Havell went about to prove that

decentralization was not necessary, to get rid of the backlog of six months

End of Side 1 of Tape 1

Side 2 of Tape 1

MUHN: Now we have Clawson coming in, and we've read his memoirs. I don't know if you've seen them yet. They just came out ... He had a definite agenda. Havell was to go, plus [many] of the Division Chiefs. How do you feel about Clawson's tenure, what I mean, did it seem to invigorate this new organization or

SENZEL: Very definitely. Complete new, he started, I don't know what he said in his memoirs, but he started many things. He tended to do that, to start things, and then go on to something else. Letting the, hoping the organization would pick them up, and follow through further. The idea, he had the first Bureauwide conference of all the disciplines, Washington, the field, Salt Lake City, in January 1949. He instituted most of the reports from the field to Washington, and vice versa.

STUART: And this had never been done before.

SENZEL: No. I guess. He went out looking, recruiting people who he knew in the Bureau of Agriculture Economics, Harold Hochmuth and Robert Harrison. Started sending people, some of the people off to colleges. Russ Penny went off to Harvard, I think went to law school.

STUART: Russ, he found Russ Penny or

SENZEL: No. Russ Petty [Penny] was already [on board], but he identified him as a comer. Wrote an article with [Clawson on] the Grazing Districts. Sent me to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Another started that kind of program but was expanded by a subsequent Director. Course, decentralization, which he wanted. He started, of course, was frustrated by the

Appropriations Committee, but then when that left, he had a midnight move to get over the, he closed land offices.

SENZEL: He had me do a lot of different things, and reporting system statistics, other such things. He had a, set up a, what was it, weekly or monthly, weekly meeting with what he called the new people, and just sit around for an hour or so and discuss. We had one project, to estimate what would Bureau programs be in five years. This fermentation, he encouraged people to write, he encouraged people, he saw that people got credit for what they did. This happened, you know, it was a whole new thing here. Of course, there was a lot of internal fears, some resistance, but he convinced both men and women who had been in Washington Office, that it might be a good idea to go in the field. With the decentralization case work, and some did and were very happy to have done it. I never heard of anybody regretted it, of course they could come back if they wished. Generally, so that was the sort of thing, it was a complete ... Complete reversal, and we have the, had the Grazing Service part that had its own "summer school," where they got up ahead and drank a lot and all that. Clawson expanded that to the Bureau at the Squaw Butte Station. The first one was three weeks, the one I went to was three weeks ... but after that it was two weeks then. A mix of disciplines came and discussed, each one, discussed tenets to bind the Bureau together, to get some understand, mutual understanding where they were going, what they were doing.

SENZEL: [One of the field men who was in the Washington Office one day, said that Clawson was coming in, and he's going to turn the place upside down. Which, but it wasn't, he didn't do it in a way to actually turn it upside, but to increase the opportunities, change directions. He had meetings with the full Bureau in Washington, explaining that he couldn't do

STUART: Did he have an understanding of land management needs, and did he bring in natural resource management programs that were different from GLO that?

SENZEL: Oh, yes. Yes, I think he had, first two years in California, [Clawson] certainly had an opportunity to see the different things that the Bureau was doing, what was going on. The conflicts, the difficulties, so that he had that, but he didn't research. He knew, he came from Nevada. He knew, he did a study of the grazing

STUART: The livestock [industry].

SENZEL: He had a knowledge, for he made various studies, I'm not familiar with all of them, but grazing patterns. So he had that, and of course, the capacity, a good capacity to learn, an open mind, and he sought all that. He brought in new breeds, different disciplines.

MUHN: We're going to see Clawson this afternoon and interview him. From things that I've been reading ... Clawson was definitely pushed out.

SENZEL: Yes. No question about it.

MUHN: What ... surprised me was the fact that when attacking Mr. Clawson, many of the Republicans were referring to him as anywhere from being a semi-Socialist to a probable Communist .... Did they also ... [reach] into ... the Bureau of Land Management at this time, looking for people that they thought were

SENZEL: Well, before that ... Truman had instituted a loyalty program. I didn't see any evidence of people reaching in to find things, but the very fact of having the program and started to bring up things about the personal lives of some of some employees. There's one young man on my staff, who, when he was much younger, had signed a petition to put a Communist on the New York ballot, which he did to give, he wasn't Communist, by the way, didn't mean to show the slightest, he did it to allow

them to exercise their political rights, whatever they were. That came up and they called him upstairs, and he asked me to go up and speak on his behalf, and I said, "Well, we're two Jewish young men. I think we'd net ourselves nothing, I asked Alf [?]to do it. Alf was that kind of person. He was conservative, but idealistic. Not Buck, he was a conservative idealist. And he went up to testify, but that's the sort of thing, that started to disrupt. But they didn't do anything to him. Until the second time, it came up and with the change in Administration, they went looking for jobs, not to reach out to get Communists, to reach in and get jobs, so they opened a lot of other questions. There's a man in our organization that fathered a child with another agency. They drug that up on him. Couple of times, and he quit. This young man quit, so laid openings for, but that wasn't the only thing they used to make openings. They transferred people to the field or ordered them to go to the field. It was more, I think, to get jobs for their own people, than to any, I never heard of that type of attack on Clawson, I

STUART: Where'd you get that, Jim?

SENZEL: I don't doubt it.

MUHN: There's a historian named Elmo Richardson, who brought it up and then a man's whose Ph D. dissertation I read, both were writing about Eisenhower and Interior in the ’50s, and they were quoting letters by various Republican people and they'd mentioned, you know, that people were referring to Clawson as semi-Socialist, and, you know, I mean, it's obvious they were reaching, because, you know, Clawson was career civil service and McKay's philosophy was he wanted his own people in there,

SENZEL: That's right, what was I going to say? Some of the House members, of the Committee criticized Clawson because he had the nerve to testify before the Committee that the public lands belonged to the American people, not to just people in the West, a particular state. That may lead someone to say he's a Socialist.. He's talking about the, that the American people

had a right to say, all the people had the right to say what should happen to public lands, not just the local users. So that maybe, I never heard [it]. The excuse they gave for firing him was that they ordered him to take another job, and he wouldn't take the other job, so he was insubordinate, and therefore had to be fired. And I went up and spoke to him at that time, and he said he would like to stay on, but he already had another job. And if he didn't have one, he could get one. But as a matter of principle, it was supposed to be a civil service job, and they changed that. They deliberately made a public fight of it.

MUHN: Let's move to Woosley ... What kind of man was Woosley?

SENZEL: Woosley personally was a very fine man, is a very fine man. Bright. Beautiful sense of humor. Just keen as could be, very friendly, when he got to know people, and know who they were, he helped them. That's what happened to me. At first, I was told I was not wanted by the Bureau, and I started to look around for a job, but as the deadline date came in, Hochmuth came to me, called me up and asked me if I'd be willing to stay on, so I said yes ... I'd been under a cloud at the beginning [of Woosley's tenure], the rumor was I'm [Woosley] going to get rid of the Easterners. Now some of them were Jewish, most of them were Jewish. But I one of the first, now Woosley was a very uncertain ... of himself. The first place he came in as Administrator, the main job, Administrator, he didn't qualify under civil service, so he was Administrator for a year, and then he was appointed as Director. Then he kept to himself pretty much. We had the Christmas party, for example, he went off to his room. We used to have some very joyous Christmas parties. The GLO and BLM were pretty good drinkers.

STUART: Still are.

MUHN: And you've already said that about the Grazing Service, so a perfect marriage there when they had their reorganization.

SENZEL: Especially in the field. When they went to the field, it was just, I, there were some alcoholics around out there, but by and large, they were very sociable drinkers. Woosley at first was very standoffish and with his own personnel, and he wouldn't go to the Hill, for some reason. I was one of the first to go with Clarence Bradshaw, an attorney, to testify on the legislation. And as he got to know me, he wanted me to be appointed Assistant Chief, to have the status when I went over to the Hill to testify. That's how the, trying to say what his personality was, as his philosophy, he was antagonistic to, not individual people particularly, but the idea that the technicians of the Bureau knew more than the applicants, and that was, of course, that kind of philosophy lead to the scandals of the latter part, and [Secretary of the Interior] MacKay loss of job. [Secretary of the Interior] Seaton came in to try to repair the damage that he had done. Some of his beliefs never changed. For example, he never conceded that land classification allowed us to do what we thought the laws directed us to do. Other things, after a while, he'd go along with them. Towards the end of his tenure, for example, when we mentioned recreation, we wanted to get the Secretary to make a statement about the recreation values of the public lands, had come up in cases before the Bureau, where Hochmuth, I and others went to argue with Woosley, and we could do that. We could argue with him, he may disagree with us, but he'd listen to us, and we'd try to get him to say, for him to make a statement that recreation values were [a] proper classification concept, but he wouldn't buy it. He didn't overturn us on the cases, but he wouldn't buy the going along with that. What we'd have, say is a tract of land, adjoining a river used by the general public for access to the land. We wanted to protect it in the public ownership, he wouldn't agree to that.

MUHN: He wanted to do that rather than going R&PP, correct? Keep that managed under BLM or

SENZEL: It was to protect the value, if he could get a R&PP applicant to manage it, that was it. We went in, that's one of the things we accomplished during the Woosley regime, was the Amendment that the Recreation Act of 1926 and into the

Recreation and Public Purposes Act, which is one of the big, I think, improvements in the public land laws. We got some improvements in the public land laws then, that decade, but they were in the fields of disposal, appeals, and obsolete stuff, allowing the states to select mineral lands for mineral lands laws. The Recreation and Public Purposes Act, which was mainly the spoils but it was into leasing and the classification features. But on the recreation, towards the end of Woosley's, Harold Jorgenson came up with the idea, let's get a statement that Seaton would sign about recreation values of the public land. I said, okay, go ahead, do it. I don't know if Woosley would buy it but go ahead. First thing I know, it's back down, in a few weeks or so, with Woosley's surname and Seaton's signature. That was the, and we put that in the Manual, and that was the first public recognition that, policy statement BLM had a recreational role.

STUART: Was that near the end?

SENZEL: Close

STUART: ’60 or so?

SENZEL: Close to then, about that time.

MUHN: I have a reference to Seaton's doing that.

STUART: That's interesting, that is was a BLM initiative that was established

SENZEL: Oh yes, that's right. There was, {**Jorgie**} was one of the idea men. He was very literate. He's probably the best writer around that we had. Still is. Yes. He's a very devoted person, I don't know if you've met him or . Quite absentminded. All kinds of stories about what, he's one of the people that were ferment in the agency. As the years went on,

he got more and more of these people, cause we tend to forget the people say that Forestry from the, those were dissatisfied with the regimentation of the Forest Service. That sort of person came mavericks.

STUART: I think we still do.

SENZEL: And it was very, they were welcome. Hochmuth was like that. He was unwilling to be regimented.

MUHN: You know, one of the things when I read through Our Public Lands, [and] you wrote a lot of things in Our Public Lands. One of the things that you bring up, and you can see it in the statistics. You guys are just overwhelmed in the 50s with applications, Small Tract, Desert Land at certain points in time. You were working in that Lands Division, and ... you're saying ... that Woosley wasn't convinced about classification, yet when [I] read the [annual] reports on classification, things are still going on, although large studies like Missouri Basin are somewhat slow, but, you're doing your classifications almost on a application by application basis. What were the problems with the lands program at this time, ... from your perspective?

SENZEL: After the war, during the war too, the value of the lands were increasing all the time, something that we didn't necessarily recognize the fact, as I said, during the GLO days, they didn't have a way of finding out the interest in the public lands, in oil and gas, I guess other things [were] increasing. Clawson came in, we began to have a control statistical system and that started to show up. In the, after Korea, it just exploded, this interest, economy of the west where the public lands were. It was just growing by leaps and bounds. Not fully recognized by everybody. Except certainly recognized by people who had been dealing in lands, the big land and cattle companies, and there's interest in picking up lands and the Bureau didn't have a good appraisal philosophy. They were in house trained on the job, I mean there was no training at all, they didn't get any professional training. They got the idea of speculative values. The people who didn't know the west were

coming in and paying exorbitant for it, they didn't realize, and they tended to discount the highs when they made their studies, that these were speculative values. Woosley came in with the idea that the fair market value appraisal was wrong. He came from the land bank system, where it was appraised for loan purposes, which is a low fair market value, because it was supposed to be a long-term, I think they called it productive value. Pressure on the Bureau was coming from two sides. Internally, some of us, including Carl Lassem [Karl Landstrom?], he was in charge of appraisal for a while, he was one of the key ones pressing for the fair market value to get, I was fighting, I saw the error in the averaging process they were using. In more recent data, it's getting lost in the averages and the older data. But Woosley resisted that and he, [and] the old regional administrator in Billings who also came on land bank system, he also resisted that. It got to be that people recognized it and there was a rush to get in there and pick up on the public sale applications increased, the Small Tract applications increased, Desert Land applications, development during the war, I think you read in the article with the heavy machinery, the pumps, and the pumps that all increased [underground water output], then together with this real demand, there [were] the speculators, dishonest dealers, who came in to

End of Side 2 of Tape 1

Side 3 (Tape 2)

SENZEL: They started advertising in the newspaper. The veterans get, veterans' preference, trying to get your tracts around Las Vegas for $25 they were charged their $300, $400 for filling out the paper, they piled applications one on top the other, they didn't care where the land was, were in dry washes, and the "blow sands" area. Then they, somebody, found out about the Desert Land [Act] and the fraud and operations started with that. Arizona homesteads in the Paradise Valley, where Goldwater lived. All this sort of thing was, and they made some mistakes with some mining claims. The result was that we did a lot of business activity leading into nothing, spending more and more money in the Land Offices and those of us on the Lands Staff wanted to do something about it, so we had, came up with all sorts of schemes: that classification would have a

permanent effect, that you couldn't file on top of it, withdrawal of lands, all kinds of schemes, and we were turned down. Until the, it was a losing battle all the time, we didn't any place until the Las Vegas situation got so out of hand, it was taken up in the Assistant Secretary's office. He was going to solve it, once and for all, but it got worse. And finally, I came up with a scheme whereby we, I told Hochmuth would stop this thing dead in its tracks, and figuring by that time that everybody was so disgusted that they'd go along with things they had turned down before. Made up a package and put it in and six months [later the problem] was killed. The Small Tracts, stopped the great influx of Small Tract applications, started a sales program, public auctions.

Desert Land stuff in California got out of hand so much, that seemed to be willing to, the authorities were, seemed to do something about and. Lars came up with a scheme that the, at out urging, Landstrom was in on this urge that something be done with the general scheme that the Classification Order, that dealt with the entire basin, underground water basin in the California Desert, once it was classified not suitable, you could not file any applications anymore. We give the people the papers and their money back right away. So, this process started to control it, but then the House Committee on Government Operations got into the act, so that there was a great deal of political hate being stacked up here. They went into the Southwest [?] and they attacked the appraisal system, they attacked the exchanges that were there, so that in order to respond, we finally got Seaton to issue some, by press release, some anti-speculation policies. You may have and through this process, we started turning this land situation around.

MUHN: Now what was the Las Vegas problem? In more detail.

SENZEL: It was a gold mine for the promoters of small tract applications. Some of those in California published articles, ads, in the California papers saying that, veterans, here's your chance to get some, five acres on the Las Vegas Strip, for $25.00, I think. Veterans had the preference and they just flooded in. As I say, they didn't care where the lands were, if it was on top of each other, that a contract for services said, "Our contract terms are satisfied when you get the pink slip

from the land office." The pink slip is just a receipt for the filing fee. And they charged whatever they wanted to people, and I was told then, that in Las Vegas itself, that there would people at the various casinos, on the steps or whatever, selling applications. Some of the people who bought them were drunks from New York City, and we were just getting all kinds of applications and we could not process, they were on top of mining claims, and they, and in Nevada, the local people formed, some entrepreneur formed the Nevada Homesteaders Organization who represented their members before the Department, and they put pressure on the, all kinds of pressure to, all kinds of schemes, one scheme was that instead of, they had to build a house at that time, was supposed to be a house of some sort, a residence of some kind on the land in order to enter a patent. Someone came up with the idea that it was premature to build houses, what they'd do is make a requirement to drill a well, because every lot had to have a well. Okay, the Department brought that and put that in. People didn't want to dig wells, so they came up with another scheme that what they'd do was figure out how much it would cost to build a house, what the value of that house would be after three years, which it took to earn a patent and charged the applicant that amount to purchase the land, instead of putting actual cash into the land, they did, I think it came up to several hundred thousands of dollars. Put that in effect, very little, didn't help any. So, things went on like that, everything got so bad that the Congress took advantage of the opportunity to kill it altogether. It was just doing too much damage to the Bureau, that was our first thing. After a while, when I went out into the field to see what actually was happening, and found terrible, terrible eyesores: Desert, beautiful desert country was split up into five-acre tracts, roads just bulldozed.

STUART: And I'm sure there's a public protest

SENZEL: Slabs, the County Officials started complaining, Council of City Governments, or whatever it was called, started to complain.

MUHN: Let's get to Woosley here. I was just going to say, we [have] heard from someone that he did not want to leave ... why did he want to stay? And I assume he was ... removed because the Democrats wanted their own person, just like the Republicans removed Clawson. Do you know?

SENZEL: No. He never said anything about it. He wanted to stay. I think he just liked it, he liked the people, and the people were very friendly to him. We had our disagreements, in fact, he never reconciled himself to Karl Landstrom's philosophy. He didn't like people's philosophy. But I think he just enjoyed it. Got the Potomac fever, and he didn't want to leave. But he went over to the Senate and worked for them for a while.

STUART: I was wondering if you could bring us up to date on the classification work that the Bureau was doing. When it started, before the Classification and Multiple Use Act and what that did to change it. In other words, how much of the land was classified and how much needed to be done in the ’50s, and how did that progress in the ’60s?

SENZEL: Well, actually classification was done on a case-by-case basis. So that there was no great reservoir of classified lands as such. The, those, except where we got the special classification orders where we took care of a whole desert basin when we had extensive Desert Land filings. The fact that it was once classified didn't stop somebody from plowing it away until it was classified again. When the Recreation and Public Purposes Act came in, the field started to use that as a technique for protecting lands in federal ownership, classifying under the Recreation and Purposes Act. That wasn't proper. I tried to stop it but was never able to do it. So, there was some areas of classified lands that were classified under the [R&PP] Act, really not for transfer under the Act, but at least they're saying that you need to protect in federal ownership, no other way to do it, and these are lands that the community was using for something, to keep areas here and there for one use or the other.

These other things that were going on, like the Missouri River Basin Program, was really not a classification program. Those

were studies, to develop a reservoir of data about the land so they could be used for planning the various programs for classification when the application came in. And that was really a data gathering program on records and aerial photos.

In the ’50s, the idea of small area classifications came in. Again, that was not really, truly a classification, it was taking a small area and determining what all the values were there, and coming up with some idea of the programs it would be under. I don't know how much work was done there, but it was part of the whole system of people getting really acquainted with the property there were managing and preparing really for the future.

Then when, this is past the period when Landstrom took over, I came up with the Master Unit Land Classification System. Again, wasn't land classification, but a program to divide up all the lands into natural units, not necessarily homogeneous units, but natural units, determine what all the value was there, and then to describe what programs should be in there. It was finally killed by the, during [Director] Stoddard's time, he wanted to set up his own land classification system. However, the work that was done on this system was clearly the basis for the planning system that [Bob] Jones eventually took up.

STUART: Who developed this Master Unit Classification?

SENZEL: It was my concept and I did a lot of writing to prepare, also staff did the writing on it. And kicked off very popular, it gave them a way to concentrate their efforts, to bring into focus, things that they knew about the lands, but they could never demonstrate. They'd send a man out with a desert land application and look at it from that point of view. He knew that this was prime hunting ground, public hunting ground for the Californians. But that never showed up in his report. Talked about the soils and the people. This start to develop a picture. In fact, in the ’50s, when I started doing land office inspections, land inspections, which was both the classification and the land office, I started to talk about this to people and trying to get them, on their own, when they went into an area; for example, around Pinedale, Wyoming, they told me there was a lot of desert land activities, I said, why is

that? They said, that's one of the main access to Yellowstone National Park. They want lands used for motels, and things like that. I said, write that up, give us the report that takes the area as a whole, and then when the cases come in, we'd know how to deal with them. It was a long time before that.

STUART: So even in the ’60s, the Bureau was still reacting on a case-by-case basis, depending on applications

SENZEL: Yes, but he had approved the master unit system, which was taking an area approach, and he had the 18 month moratorium to cut out the *land classifications, trying to cope with the backlog of writing new regulations and putting new procedures in all that.

STUART: When did the Bureau first start classifying land to determine values independent of these applications.

SENZEL: The Classification and Multiple Use Act, that was legal basis that we had to do it. Otherwise, it was just wheel spinning. Didn't have any legal effect. This helped us when we had cases, but it gave the field focus points for the subject of the reports until the CMU Act.

STUART: So the Master Unit was just a better way of classification.

SENZEL: It was to record and the local office with a copy to Washington what the values were in each one of the units, which the field itself identified, and if you know from Jones' system, that was the approach taken. He worked them out of Washington, the field made recommendations. Jones' staff was ... adjusted it so that it fit into one big picture. Then those were the units that we were playing with, they very often were the same units, because they came from the same field people, the master unit system there was. So that we could recapitulate from, even the time I started in 1939, from Bureau's statistical system,

which was operated by the Accounts Division was in total disarray and I went way back in all the tabulations to get out the bugs and the errors. From that beginning, as far as I'm concerned, since I started, there was a constant internal effort to reach long range goals.

SENZEL: And that's really what, you say, why I joined the Bureau, that was just happen stance. The trap was why did you stay, the trap was seeing what needed to be done and the possibility that you could accomplish it. And [that's what] fired 'em [up]. Many people then, a lot of people stayed most of their professional lives. Still today.

STUART: That's a good reason to stay. And I think a lot of that has happened. The Bureau has evolved so much.

SENZEL: Yes, oh yes. It's totally different.

STUART: It's a great challenge to try to tell this story.

SENZEL: It's the, with all its bad reputation, the Bureau story is a success story. The odds against it were terrible. We had to deal with political pressures, some ... even when we started public participation programs, which was to really to make our job easier by getting all the people who were conflicting, come in the same arena. Used to be you'd have to hope that application came in, you fought the homestead application although the reasons were many and may be some wildlife country, or was state programs, you know, something like that. We fought, the homesteader lost money, then the state would come in and we'd fight the battle with the state. The public participation idea was to get all the people there at the same time, and people were instructed that when they got an application, and then had their initial decision, that initial decision was to go out and by record or [?]. That started to bring into focus the conflicts that we were trying to deal with, all the pressures there were being put on us.

STUART: It's a good education for our publics too.

SENZEL: We had excellent results from the CMU Act. In fact, it continues today. The same consequence .... The, say the Woosley Administration was user oriented, specially during the earlier years, which is not bad. You have to be user oriented, but it wasn't balanced by a broader concept of what implications were to the public interest. And during the period, the conflicts built up, which erupted later. As I said, in lands, they had the problem of the anti-speculation policies of Seaton and the conservation policies that they wrote for [Secretary of the Interior] Udall, which were the anti-speculation policies turned around to speak of not speculation in lands but the conservation of resources. In the O&C country, the pressure was to put more and more timber on the market, cause there was an excess of milling capacity, all the timber you can get. At the same time, there was growing dissatisfaction within the staff, parts of it, that the lands were not being managed for all their values properly. This broke out finally in Stoddard's regime, with the Getty Stoddard affair, which you probably didn't going to hear more and more. Range management, what little was accomplished in the way of matching use with grazing capacity was set back. In fact, some our District managers were removed.

STUART: I'm sorry, was that, what was accomplished under Clawson was set back?

SENZEL: The forward movement, the, and that lead to the programs in the ’60s and ’70s, and to FLPMA which had its own requirements for range management. So that was, go ahead.

STUART: Could you be a little more specific on that? You were saying what little was accomplished under Clawson was set back under Woosley?

SENZEL: The forward movement.

STUART: Or just the movement towards range management?

SENZEL: Clawson didn't, wasn't able to accomplish much. There wasn't, he didn't have the opportunity. What he did get was the, one of the centers of resistance to Taylor Grazing Act grazing provisions came out of Nevada from the beginning. They were the ones that took the case to the Supreme Court and constitutes their hostility towards the Act. They fought it tooth and nail. There were large areas in Nevada that the Bureau couldn't get into grazing districts. Clawson got those into grazing districts, and finally, because of a fluke in our statistics, he got the law changed that removed the acreage limitation for the grazing districts altogether. In Squaw Butte, the, Clawson's chief counsel, Wasserman, pleaded with him to get on with the trespass, anti-trespass problem by [?]. Fortunately, that never happened. Needed Washington backing because the muscle wasn't there to back it. And they dominated the Grazing District Board, so that there was no pressure to change that, which again left problems to break out later.

MUHN: This ... brings up one thing, ... in the Annual Reports during the Eisenhower years, and in Our Public Lands, the term multiple use management [is] thrown around, but from what you've just told me, it was more of a ... word without any substance.

SENZEL: Without any official substance. The internal, the professional people, wanted it, and were working towards it, and in fact, they started to talk with each other. In 1953, when the reorganization then, part of the reorganization was a planning group which, made up of representatives of Divisions, the Land Classification and Resource Divisions, and there we were unsuccessful in Lands, unsuccessful in getting the other divisions to tell Lands what their programs were. I argued that if Lands knew what the programs were, they would know better how to classify, there'd be less friction between the Lands, in fact, in Oregon, the friction was so great that the land classification was by committee, taken out of the hands of the Lands people. So, but then as the years went on, we started to help each other. I was given, one of the problems, big problems of the Washington office was when reports came to the field, the mail room sent them all over, you never knew. So, the Director

asked me to be the recipient of all of them and distribute them. All the divisions agreed to that except the soil conservation people. Nobody was to look at their reports before they got them. I never got the system in place. That's the business of bringing the whole Bureau together. Probably the multiple use expressions came out of the Lands setup chiefly. They were the ones that were really concerned about it. Grazing people were interested in grazing, and wildlife, to that extent. Although wildlife was, again, token. They didn't cut grazing [for wildlife].

STUART: No.

SENZEL: *Still haven't. The regulations, the worst regulations in the whole Bureau were the grazing regulations because they said absolutely nothing ... they were made by committee: users and the lawyers. They'd go out in the field and they'd work for months, years on regulations, came out because it was just no substance what so ever. But some things like the dealing with wildlife like allocation of forage for wildlife, the District Manager may allocate forage for wildlife, may.

MUHN: May. Kind of open ended there.

SENZEL: Well we did. Some of them did. [District] graziers would usually get smacked around for that, if you gave them [the ranchers] room. I know the Bureau intimately, partly through the statistics, partly through just interest, partly through assignments, but I even went back into the IDs [Interior Decisions] and LDs [Land Decisions] and the old circulars to get at what the stated purpose of all this was. I got to know, I hope I got to know the background, so I could recognize the problems and what to do about them. I liked the work, I liked the people, I think it's, it's an organization with all the characters in it. I did my part there.

STUART: It's no gray bureaucracy, is it. A real collection.

SENZEL: And when you go to a public meeting of the Forest Service, go to a public meeting of BLM, it's been going from Sodom and Gomorrah to, there's something happening in BLM and it's interesting and dynamic. That was speaking as I said, Woosley was a very fine man. He's still a very fine man.

SENZEL: He had his

STUART: Point of view.

SENZEL: Well, he came out of ... Idaho, a very small town, he was a user. He was with the politico; he got the state job ... And he honestly believed, oh yeah, he was at the state land commission. And he really believed then, of course, he didn't have the intellectual background, which causes you to reach to the future rather than

[voices trails off].

The interview with Mr. Senzel continues; the transcription ends here.